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ABSTRACT

A program to develop career aspirations in middle school students has been implemented in the Philadelphia Public Schools and is entitled "Give Our Children Room to Grow." It utilizes a series of teacher guided projects; dialogues with resource persons from industry, business, and upper schools; field trips; pupil created projects; and hands on activities to expand the students' awareness of the relationship between school, home, community, and jobs. Different aspects of the program are discussed, and include: Focus on Pupils, with manuals and resources materials for teachers and workbooks for students, encouraging informal discussions interrelating education, the individual student, and the world of work; Visitors to the Classroom, including representatives from industrial and commercial establishments, near peers, and those requested by students to serve as role models and to provide occupational information; Career Choice, discussing the influence significant people may have in determining a child's area of interest and touching on educational relevancy; Environments, encouraging thoughts about future communities; and The Self, encouraging verbalizaton of hoped for personality development. Responses from children participating in the program are included, and it is stated that they are indicative of the value of the program as a motivational educational device. (LH)

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GIVE OUR CHILDREN ROOM TO GROW

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"My ambition in life is to become an artist...it all started in the fifth grade when...."

"I always dreamed of an acting career."

"I want to be a social worker so that I can help people get better jobs and living conditions."

"I was thinking about becoming a nurse because there are so many sick people that need help."

These are examples of the career aspirations of pupils participating in the ROOM TO GROW PROGRAM. ROOM TO GROW is a career and self-awareness model for elementary level students. It expands the students' awareness of the relationship between home, school, community, and jobs. The program develops the self-image and the interdependence of the above four aspects of a student's life by utilizing a series of teacher guided projects, dialogues with resource persons from industry and business and upper schools, trips into the world of work, pupil created projects, and "hands on" activities.

FOCUS ON PUPILS: To aid the teachers and pupils to concentrate on the pupil as the central focus of the program, the teacher is provided with manuals and resource materials, and each pupil receives a workbook. These aids have been prepared by the Vocational Guidance Service of the Division of Pupil Personnel and Counseling of the Philadelphia Board of Education. The aids are loosely structured and assist in creating an atmosphere in the classroom wherein each pupil questions himself or herself creatively and imaginatively. Discussions are informal, and each query is accepted with concern and dignity by the teacher. Some of the topics in the teacher developed section are:

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"Who Am I?"

"What I Like to Do in My Spare Time?"

"Education and My Career"

"My Successes"

In general, these topics include any ideas which interrelate education and the world of work.

VISITORS TO THE CLASSROOM: The teacher guided projects are complemented with numerous visits to the class by representatives from commercial and industrial establishments, high schools, and colleges. The visitors are role models for the pupils. What they have to say is usually supplemented by demonstrations. The emphasis, however, is always on the person in the job rather than the job itself.

Demonstrators include workers from many vocational areas: health and welfare, electronics, communications, civil service, building trades, commercial and service areas. More than sixty commercial, industrial, business, and educational institutions participate as resource presenters. Many have prepared appropriate illustrated booklets and brochures which present clusters of current emergent jobs appropriate to the program with emphasis on the "role model" aspects of the program.

Most significant is the appearance of presentors requested by the pupils. These include parents, workers from the school community, faculty members, former students, high school students preparing for various vocations, college students, and small neighborhood business people.

Particular emphasis is placed on near peers. In this context, students from technical high schools and other upper schools come to talk about themselves--where they attended elementary school, why they are pursuing their particular studies, what they hope to be, and what plans they have for the future.

"CAREER CHOICE": The development of a career begins in childhood and is af-

fected by the quality of experiences to which an individual is exposed. Growing up, developing a personality, feeling confident to cope with the world--all influence "career choice." Research reveals that young people are often influenced toward a particular career by a significant person. The who in a person's life, therefore, is important in shaping a career plan. A child who does not have a model in his life is seriously disadvantaged.

One of the many examples of the who in a student's life is the following:

"My ambition is to be a science and social studies teacher because I think that goegraphy and science are my best subjects. I would become an expert in the studies. I first got the idea of being a teacher from Mrs. Bluestein..."

ROOM TO GROW helps youngsters to understand the relevancy of school as a preparation for a future constructive life. Students write:

"A person's career depends on his or her education. My future consists of three things: education, the enjoyment of my job, and the compensation it rewards me with...My intentions are to try hard and to stay in school. My future plan is to become a computer programmer. My career depends mostly on a good foundation, and I am getting it now in school. I think I have decided on what I am to be...a guidance system named ROOM TO GROW has helped me. One day when I am a computer programmer, I shall be glad that it started in the sixth grade."

"Education is the key to a successful career. To begin my future, I must work hard in school and then on toward college. When I am a little older, I would like to become a pediatric nurse. This job requires a lot of studying and training. I also plan to do some volunteer nurse work. Children are an important part of life. I would like to devote a part of my life to the caring of children. Children need attention and understanding. I especially like to care for little babies because they need the most attention. There is one thing in life children will remember and cherish and that is the love you give them."

ENVIRONMENTS: Just as ROOM TO GROW pupils are stimulated to think about the future, they also talk about the neighborhood in which they live and their hopes for the kinds of environments in which they would eventually like to settle. When asked to express themselves about environments of the future, children write:

When I grow up, I hope the neighborhood I live in will...

*"Be clean and not have gang wars and fights."

*"Have nice clean streets and no rats. I am hoping there is no such thing as air pollution."

*"Be nice, quiet, freindly and roomy. The reason I would like it to quiet is so my husband could have time to relax. The reason for it to be friendly is that when we first move in my children and I would be able to make friends easily. The reason for it to be roomy is that I could have my own flower garden. Most of all I would like fresh air in my community."

THE SELF: These young people are concerned about the self. ROOM TO GROW supplies ample opportunities and activities to verbalize about the kind of person "I'd like to be." For example:

*"I would like to be the kind of person that can be trusted, dependable and loyal. I feel that if I were that kind of person, I could get along with my friends, classmates, and my teacher."

*"The kind of person I would like to be is to help the poor and those that cannot help themselves."

*"I would like to be a big-hearted strong person and, I would like to be smart. I would like to be kind, loyal and dependable. I would like to have fun.

ROOM TO GROW ACTIVITIES can become an integrative experience in the school life of the student; it can integrate the areas of language arts, social studies,

and human relations. ROOM TO GROW pupils are encouraged to utilize all language means to express their feelings about their vocational experiences. Poetry, one form of expression, is illustrated by the following:

EDUCATION

School is education.
Education is civilization.
Civilization is your world.
Just a twirl.
So don't give it up
But live it up.
If you finish elementary school
Junior high school
And high school
Man that's real cool!
So go ahead and get an education
And don't be so impatient.
If those twelve years don't go fast
Take my word it'll last.
And man that's got class!

The reactions of the students to the program are indicative of the value of the program as a motivational educational device. Here are a few examples:

"ROOM TO GROW helped me try to choose a career for the future. Choosing careers is fun to do, but it is very important in life. I learned a lot from ROOM TO GROW and it was a nice subject to have in school."

"One thing I learned about ROOM TO GROW is that if you don't have a good education you won't get a good job."

"I learned that everyone has brains and if you use them you can do something for yourself with them."

An excellent summary of the theoretical, philosophical and psychological developmental aspects that form the basis of the ROOM TO GROW operational program are contained in the following documents:

1. "Theories of Career Development." Samuel H. Osipow: Appleton, Century-Crofts, New York, 1968.
2. "Occupational Information in the Elementary School." Willa Norris; Science Research Associates, Chicago, 1972.
3. "Guidance in the Elementary Schools." H.J. Peters, B. Shertzer, W. Van Hoose; Rand McNally, Chicago, 1972.

A complete list of the publications of the ROOM TO GROW program can be obtained by writing: ROOM TO GROW, Stevens School, Room 305, 13th & Spring Garden Street, Phila., Penna. 19123.